



## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

---

A method of imaging a patterned sample comprising acquiring at least one image of the sample by illuminating the sample through an optical arrangement and collecting light reflected from the sample through said optical arrangement, wherein the optical arrangement has a predetermined numerical aperture NA and is located a predetermined distance from the sample. This predetermined distance being offset from a focal distance by an effective Talbot distance multiplied by a predetermined coefficient, the method thereby improving a smoothness of the image of the sample.